

# *Postcard from Iraq*



At the entrance to a new emergency hospital in Irbil.



A new city park in Kirkuk.

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My turn.

After trying for two years to get here, my tour in Iraq turned out to be all that and a lot more than I expected. My work as a public affairs specialist here has been rewarding, educational, interesting and never dull to say the least.

I'll be the first to admit my initial skepticism of the big picture benefit of our reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

I've visited all of the Corps of Engineers area and resident offices in the north and central districts and walked building sites with dedicated project engineers in Mosul, Al Asad, Fallujah, Baghdad and Kirkuk. I have witnessed the transformation in the Kurdish Region and seen the commercial construction cranes in Irbil that now dot the landscape.

What's changed? I have seen the look of determination in the eyes of the Iraqis I have met that demonstrates their resolve to make this emerging democracy work. I have seen a people extremely thankful for the Multi-National military forces that provide training, security and stability. I've observed a citizenry grateful for the schools, hospitals, medical clinics and rule of law projects the United States has built for their country.

These are a people who've known tyranny, lawlessness and decades of a brutal dictatorship. But also a people determined and ready to assume the responsibility of democracy and self-government.

How can the emerging democracy in Iraq fail when they have the United States to use as a role-model? And although our mere 233 years of self-rule amounts to a blink of an eye in a region referred to as the "Cradle of Civilization," they have much to learn about our society and its value placed on all human life, tolerance and equal opportunity for all people.

Will they stumble at times? Yes. Will there be abuses of power and corruption? No doubt. Will they survive and prosper and become a beacon and role model for democracy in the region? Insh'Allah.



An Iraqi boy celebrates the opening of a new youth center in Baghdad.